To Better Serve and Protect
Preserving the peace and protecting human rights through the lessons of the Holocaust

Holocaust Centre of Toronto
2004 Holocaust Education Week – Opening Night Program
Chief Charles H. Ramsey
Metropolitan Police Department
October 28, 2004

Chief Ramsey delivered the following address during the opening night of the Holocaust Centre of Toronto's 2004 Holocaust Education Week. The speech describes a unique training program, held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in DC, that provides law enforcement officers with a history of the Holocaust and the lessons it offers law enforcement officers and the community at large in our modern, pluralistic democracy. As one of the program's originators, Chief Ramsey now requires this one-day training for all Metropolitan Police recruits and lateral-hire officers, and veteran officers have taken the course as well. Widely acclaimed, the program has since expanded to other local and federal agencies, including police in Montgomery County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore city and Baltimore County (all in Maryland), Maryland State Police, Fairfax County (Virginia), and the FBI.

Shalom, and good evening. It is indeed an honor and a privilege for me to be your speaker tonight, for the opening night of what is certain to be a vital and powerful week of educational events and activities. I only hope that my remarks tonight will be of some interest to you, and will help set a productive and positive tone for the week.

I do want to thank and acknowledge the United Jewish Appeal Federation of Greater Toronto and the Holocaust Centre of Toronto for graciously extending this invitation to me – Chairman Howard Driman – thank you for that gracious introduction … UJA Vice President David Engel … and Education Week Co-Chairs Joan Shapero and Honey Carr. Thanks also to Rabbi Steven Saltzman and the wonderful people at Adath Israel Congregation for hosting us tonight … and to all of the committee chairs, members and staff who have made this Holocaust Education Week possible. And greetings to all of my fellow police officers who are in attendance this evening.

I also want to publicly acknowledge a few dear friends and colleagues of mine back in Washington, DC. They have been instrumental in helping to create, build and guide the "Lessons of the Holocaust" training program that I will be discussing tonight. This program has been, and continues to be, a true team effort that has involved a number of people, including – Sara Bloomfield of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Lynn Williams of her Training Team, and all the staff at the Museum … also David Friedman and the Board of Directors and staff at the Washington Regional Office of the Anti-Defamation League … and Assistant Chief Shannon Cockett, and the staff of the Maurice T. Turner Jr., Institute of Police Science – our Department's police training academy.

It took all of these individuals, and more, working together to get this program off the ground five years ago. And it has taken all of us working together to ensure that the program has remained relevant and successful, as we adapt to the new realities and new threats in the post-September 11th environment. So I don't want you leaving here tonight thinking that the "Lessons of the Holocaust" program is a one-man show. It is not. Rather, it is the result of many

dedicated people – most of whom are a lot more knowledgeable than I am – working together and really making a difference.

* * * * *

My remarks tonight are one part objective description of a police training program, and one part subjective revelation of a personal journey and transformation. For it has become increasingly difficult for me to separate the two: the program itself and my own "coming of age," if you will, about the Holocaust and its meaning for myself and my fellow police officers. Over the last few years I have learned more about the Holocaust than I ever knew before. And now, this personal journey of insight and understanding is forever tied with my desire to use the lessons of the Holocaust to improve policing in Washington, DC, and any place that wants to embark on this exploration of ideas.
Let me try to explain this connection by telling you a little bit about myself, a little bit about my own education with respect to the Holocaust, and how this resulted in the police training program we now have in Washington, DC.

I was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago, in the 1950s and 1960s. Like other young people my age, I was certainly aware of the Holocaust and knew about the atrocities committed by Hitler's Nazi regime, primarily from my studies in junior and senior high school. But looking back, I now realize that we seemed to study the Holocaust as one distinct, isolated event in history – as something that happened … something that was certainly horrific … but something that the world had somehow "gotten over" and "put behind us."

Even into adulthood, as I became a police officer and entered college and graduate school, I still didn't fully appreciate the magnitude of this event in the course of human history. And I certainly did not fully appreciate, or even recognize, the powerful lessons that the Holocaust holds for police officers – and, really, for people in all walks of life. Regrettably, I also missed some of the powerful connections between the lessons of the Holocaust and the struggle for civil rights that was being waged at that time by African-Americans, Latinos, women, gays and lesbians, and other groups in Chicago and across the United States.

So I clearly got a late start when it came to understanding and appreciating not only the Holocaust, but also the lessons – the tangible and far-reaching lessons – that the Holocaust continues to hold for people today. And the reality is that the more I learned about the Holocaust in the last few years, the more regretful – and even embarrassed – I was that I did not know more … and know more earlier in my life. But at the same time, the more I learned about the Holocaust, the more determined I was to use that knowledge – late as it may have been – to do something concrete and something meaningful to improve my police department, my profession and, ultimately, my community. It is my hope that when I leave the Metropolitan Police Department, the "Lessons of the Holocaust" training program will be something that will be viewed in that regard … as something positive, something that made a difference.

* * * * *

As you heard from my biography, I was hired as chief of the Metropolitan Police Department in April 1998. I came to Washington, DC, knowing a bit about my Nation's Capital, but certainly not knowing or appreciating the amazing breadth of resources and true national treasures that exist in the city of Washington. Fortunately for me, I was exposed to one of those national treasures – the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – literally within a few weeks after my arrival in DC.

How this came about was one of those "life moments," if you will – one of those seemingly small, but life-altering events that present themselves on only a precious few occasions in any person's life. For me, this particular "life moment" involved David Friedman, head of the regional ADL Office, who invited me to be his guest at the Holocaust Memorial Museum. I didn't know David, and I didn't know the Museum. But my instincts told me that, among the long line of people who wanted some "face time" with the new police chief in town, David was different … and his offer seemed important, or at least intriguing.

So I visited the museum as a guest of David and members of the Museum staff. I spent a good part of that tour walking and talking with a woman named Irene Weiss – who is a Holocaust survivor and a truly amazing human being. Just to hear her tell her own memories and experiences was so powerful for me. In just a few hours, she had expanded – exponentially – my field of vision about the Holocaust in ways that textbooks and lectures could never do.

As we walked through the Museum, we came to a railroad car that was used to deport Jews. As we paused inside the car, Irene pointed to a corner and described how she and her family had huddled in a corner of a railroad car just like this one, on their trip to the concentration camp. And she told me how they were forced to use a bucket to urinate during the long and difficult trip. As we exited the railroad car, we came upon a huge photograph of a train yard inside a concentration camp – a chaotic scene, with hundreds of people who have just gotten off the train and were being separated into different lines.

As we approached the photograph, Irene – very calmly and resolutely – pointed to a young girl in the bottom left corner and said, "that's me." And she went on to relate how, in the chaos of that moment, she had been separated from her family and was desperately trying to reunite with them, but to no avail. Irene went on to explain how that proved to be a fateful moment for both her and her family. Most of her family members were put into one line and led to the death chamber. She was put in a different line, sent to the work camp, and eventually survived. I wasn't sure what struck me more at that moment: the sheer horror and randomness with which Irene's family had been exterminated, or the strength and courage of Irene in relating her personal experiences.

Either way, I left that first visit to the Museum haunted by the photographs and the other images and information that I had been exposed to. I also left with a vague sense that inside that Museum there were lessons – vitally important lessons for myself and, really, for every police officer. I didn't have a clear idea of what those lessons were, but I knew that they were there … somewhere.

So a few days later, I decided to go back and tour the Museum again …on my own, this time. And I lingered for several hours trying to take it all in again and sort things through. It was during that second visit to the Museum that I realized what had haunted me so much during my first trip. It was the fact that the police – local law enforcement … my chosen profession – had played such an important role in the Holocaust. I wasn't aware of that fact, and I figured that most police officers today probably weren't aware of it either.

So I left that second visit to the Museum with a clearer understanding of what I was feeling personally … and of what the lessons of the Holocaust might hold for my fellow police officers. I also left with the notion that if we could somehow define and capture those lessons, and make them a part of the training for our police recruits, we would be able to get some real insights into

the issues and challenges facing police officers today. From there, it took people like David Friedman and Sara Bloomfield and Lynn Williams and the leadership at our police academy to turn my somewhat vague notion into something real and tangible and relevant. They have done an outstanding job in meeting that challenge, and I am very proud of their work … and proud to be here tonight talking about it.

* * * * *

I don't want to bore you with the details of the curriculum, but I do want to give you a sense of what it involves. The curriculum is a one-day "lesson plan" that all new police recruits in the Metropolitan Police Department, as well as experienced officers that our Department hires from other agencies, complete during the course of their basic training. One day may not seem like a lot of time in the course of a 24-week recruit training curriculum. But I can tell you that this is one of the most powerful and memorable days that recruits spend during their period of training.

The lesson plan begins with a guided tour of the Museum's permanent collection, much as a regular visitor to the Museum would do. For those of you who have been to the Museum, you know that visitors are given a card at the beginning of the tour describing a real-life individual impacted by the Holocaust. Along the way, you learn more about that individual and, at the end, discover his or her fate – which is death, in many cases. At the beginning of the training, our police officers also receive information about a person affected by the Holocaust. But in their case, the information is about a police officer or other law enforcement official. And by the end of the tour, they, too, discover how their particular officer responded – in most cases, capitulating to the Nazi authorities, but in some cases either running away from the situation or standing up to the Nazi atrocities.

The tour is followed by a group discussion among police recruits, Museum staff and, in some cases, survivors and other experts. The recruits are encouraged to discuss their personal reactions and feelings to the Holocaust. They are prompted to explore in greater depth the role that local police played in the Holocaust. And they discuss how the lessons of the Holocaust may be applicable to their own work in Washington, DC, in the 21st Century.

Some people have characterized the "Lessons of the Holocaust" as "sensitivity training." Although I understand and support the idea that police officers need to be empathetic to different people and different cultures, I'm not a big fan of what has traditionally been characterized as "sensitivity training." And I certainly know that what we are doing goes so much deeper, and is so much more forceful, than the "sensitivity" classes I have attended, I shudder whenever anyone describes this as "sensitivity training."

What we are engaged in is almost a "back-door" approach to getting at some of the most critical issues facing police officers and police departments today – issues such as racial profiling, biased policing, equal treatment under the law and, perhaps most importantly, the role of police officers in upholding the rights of all citizens. And we are able to explore these issues, in an objective and very compelling way, through the Holocaust. Why does the Holocaust work so well as a platform for this training? Because it is recent enough that people have at least some knowledge and some awareness of what transpired. And yet it's distant enough – in both time and space – that the people in the training were not directly involved. So we are able to use that awareness – coupled with that distance – to really get people thinking, and to open up a dialogue that otherwise might not be possible or might not be as productive had we tried to use another event, in another era, as our launching pad.

All in all, the training has been extremely powerful and extremely successful, so much so that we have expanded the program to include our experienced officers, as part of their in-service training, and our Command Staff, or Department executives. And as word of the training began to spread, several other law enforcement agencies in the DC area have adopted the program as well – including the FBI, the Maryland State Police, the Baltimore Police Department and others.

So if imitation truly is the grandest form of flattery, then I guess we have struck an important nerve with this particular training. I certainly believe that we have. Today, the city of Washington, and the surrounding region, have literally hundreds of police officers who – unlike me when I was a young officer – have a deeper understanding of the Holocaust, a deeper appreciation of the role that local police played in the Holocaust, and an even deeper appreciation of the dual roles that law enforcement must always play in preserving the peace and protecting human rights. Most of all, these officers now have a keener awareness and understanding of the price that all of society pays when the bedrock principles of democracy, liberty and freedom are taken away from our citizens.

I cannot quantify the difference that the training has made in the quality of policing in our city and our region. But from my own personal experience, I can assert, with a great deal of confidence, that this training is having a dramatic impact – now, and for generations of police officers to come.

* * * * *

My Department is truly blessed to have the US Holocaust Memorial Museum as a close and trusted partner. As part of its commitment to the law enforcement community in DC, the Museum allows law enforcement officers and their families to walk up at any time for priority admission to the permanent collection. And I encourage our officers to go back and visit the museum after their initial training session. You know – one of the remarkable things about the Museum is that each time you visit it, you come away with new information … and, for me, new insights into the topic I want to explore tonight: the role of law enforcement in a free and democratic society, as illustrated through the lessons of the Holocaust.

In discussing this topic, I will be describing various elements and features of the Museum itself … what our officers see and experience during the training. For those of you who have visited the Museum before, I offer my apologies up-front, in case my descriptions are monotonous or repetitive or not quite as dramatic as you remember them. But I don't know of any other way to express the impact that the Museum has had on me – and on our police officers – than by trying, as best I can, to give you a sense of what the images and history of the Holocaust look like through the eyes of a police officer.

So let me start at the beginning, which is actually on the top floor of the Museum.

When you first get off the elevator to begin the tour, one of the first images you confront is a 1945 photograph of a lone, emaciated, half-naked prisoner who has just been "liberated" from Buchenwald. He is eating from a simple bowl. What I have always found striking about this photograph – what has always pulled me into this particular image – is the subject's eyes. Usually, the idea of "liberation" conjures up images of parties and ticker-tape parades and wild celebrations in the streets. There were certainly many of those images of liberation captured by

photographers in western Europe and the United States as World War II was coming to a close.

But this liberation photo is obviously much different from those. And the difference, I think, is captured in the eyes of the newly liberated prisoner. His eyes tell the story of much more than just physical pain and exhaustion. They reveal a story of intense emotional pain, of anguish and, ultimately, of resignation. Given what this man has been through – given what his people have been through – there is no room for what we might consider to be natural reactions at a time of liberation … reactions of relief, excitement and joy.

And as I looked into this man's eyes, I began to think about what message they might hold for today's police officers. When the police today come in to a distressed or crime-ridden community to execute a search warrant, or make an arrest, or secure an abandoned building populated by drug dealers and prostitutes – are the eyes of those residents all that different from the eyes of the prisoner in the 1945 photograph? Do our residents really view the police as "liberators"? Or are we somehow viewed as something else? Are residents less than enthusiastic about the police because they feel that we did not do enough to prevent their neighborhood from deteriorating in the first place? Do they believe we even care about them? These are important questions that police officers seldom ask, but which I firmly believe we should be asking.

Part of the anguish I see in the eyes of that newly "liberated" prisoner at Buchenwald is the feeling that all of this human tragedy was so unnecessary. It didn't have to happen … if only the people who were supposed to protect the rights and liberties of that individual – and of the Jewish people as a whole – had stood up and done something early on. And that is part of the anguish that many of our own residents probably feel today. It's great that the police are here now – to try to clean up the problems of crime and disorder that have developed and festered over the years in their communities. But where were the police when these problems were taking hold?

Of course, there are important differences between the two scenarios, and we try to make them clear to our officers. In the 1930s and 1940s, local police officers in the Nazi empire not only didn't prevent atrocities from taking place – many police officers actively participated in the atrocities themselves, up to and including the murder of innocent people. That type of blatant criminal behavior is certainly not found in our police agencies today. But the questions – then, and now – are still the same: Where were the police? And where was the rest of the community?

Where were the police when libraries were being looted and books burned? When Jewish businesses were being illegally targeted? When people were being classified and publicly harassed, and ultimately imprisoned and slaughtered? Where were the police? And where was the rest of the community – the local politicians, other government officials, civic leaders and everyday citizens … most of whom stood by silently and watched it all happen?

Fast-forwarding several decades … where were the police when crack cocaine and other dangerous drugs invaded our communities almost overnight? When gangs, armed with powerful automatic and semi-automatic weapons, took control of many of our streets? When shootings and homicides became everyday occurrences in far too many of our communities? Where were the police? And, once again, where was the rest of the community when crime was gaining its strangle-hold?

Whether they pertain to the 1930s or the current decade -- these are compelling questions. And they are questions I think all police officers should be thinking about and talking about … and asking themselves and their colleagues. And they're questions that our training forces officers to confront.

* * * * *

At least some Americans were asking, "Where were the police?," at the time of the Holocaust. The Museum has a display of newspapers from that era, so that we can see how the United States and other countries were viewing events in Europe at the time. One of the newspaper blow-ups is from the Dallas Morning News of November 11th, 1938, reporting on the Kristallnacht Rampage of two days earlier. Its banner headline reads as follows: "Hysterical Nazis Wreck Hundreds of Jewish Shops, Burn Synagogues in Wild Orgy of Looting and Terror." What I find even more interesting, however, is the "kicker," or the sub-headline, to the story: "Policemen Refuse to Halt Organized Riots in Germany."

What I find most revealing about the headline is that it captures the long-held tradition, in both the United States and Canada at least, that if people are rioting and looting and destroying property, it is the job of the police to step in and do something. Every year, Washington, DC, is host to literally hundreds of demonstrations, marches and rallies – covering the whole spectrum of political philosophy and speech. I am sure that Toronto attracts many major events as well. If any of the participants in these demonstrations were to begin even small-scale looting or property destruction, I think all of us can be confident that police officers in our respective cities would step in, to stop the criminal behavior. That is just so fundamental to our view of what the mission of the police is all about: to protect lives and property.

How then in Germany, in the 1930s, did things get so out of balance that people could loot and destroy, in an organized and widespread manner, without the police even trying to intervene? In our current paradigm, such complacency on the part of the police seems almost impossible. But it was a reality – and a paradox – that our training program forces our police officers to think about.

I would guess that most of the recruit officers who go through the training – like most first-time visitors to the Museum – mistakenly believe that the Nazi atrocities were carried out exclusively by the military … by the infamous SA and SS troops. Most people simply don't realize the integral role that local police played – not just in passively permitting atrocities to happen, but in actively participating in many of them. I certainly did not know about the extent of local police involvement in the Holocaust until I had a chance to visit the Museum.

Over time, of course, the distinctions between local police and the Nazi military became so blurred that the two became one and the same. But even in the early days of the Nazi regime, soldiers and police – though organizationally separate – often walked hand-in-hand. There is a particularly dramatic photograph on the top floor of the Museum that really drives home this point for me. It is a particularly dark and sinister photo of a local police officer and a Nazi militia soldier flanking a large, muzzled German Shepherd – illustrating the growing trend toward "nationalizing" the police at that time.

Today, when we look back at the stated reasons for this trend of nationalizing the police – and for the increasingly repressive tactics the police employed – we see that some of the rhetoric has a familiar ring. Crime was out of control. Mobsters were in control. Enforcement of the law

across different jurisdictions was difficult. The Depression was breeding crime, and this lawlessness demanded a swift and certain response. As crime has risen at various times over the years in North America, we have heard many of these same types of arguments from some politicians and even law enforcement leaders – including, most recently, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

The Nazis didn't call it "zero tolerance" at the time, but the brand of crime control they practiced was, in fact, "zero tolerance" … taken to its most horrific extreme. For the Nazis, the concept quickly shifted from "zero tolerance" for criminal behavior … to "zero tolerance" for those people believed to be responsible for crime, disorder and other forms of hardship – in this case, Jews, gays and lesbians, the mentally ill, the physically handicapped, the "Roma" and many, many other groups of people.

Of course, the term "zero tolerance" remains quite in vogue today, in many law enforcement and news media circles. In recent years, "zero tolerance" has been credited with a variety of crime-control successes, including the dramatic reduction in homicides in New York and other cities, improved safety on our subway systems, and the like. Of course, these gains have also coincided with the growth of "community policing," a crime-fighting philosophy that emphasizes police-community partnerships and long-range problem-solving. Some people have even suggested that the terms "zero tolerance" and "community policing" are synonymous – that they describe the same basic approach to combating crime.

I don't agree with that assertion. And, quite frankly, I don't much like the concept of "zero tolerance" itself. And the thing I dislike about "zero tolerance" is that, when you stop and think about it, our ideal of democracy is not about intolerance – it is actually all about tolerance … tolerance for different people, different cultures, different viewpoints. In the name of "zero tolerance," many police departments today crack down on nuisance crimes such as drinking in public. I certainly don't advocate drinking in public. But how many of us ask the questions: Why is this person an alcoholic to begin with? And why doesn't he have a home to live in?

If we are to stand for any type of "zero tolerance," it should be zero tolerance for the causes of crime … and "zero tolerance" for the racist attitudes and the hatred that led to the Holocaust more than 70 years ago, and which continue to feed bias crimes and bigotry in many of our communities today. That is the type of "zero tolerance" we, as police officers, should be focusing on.

What followed from the policies in Nazi Germany 70 years ago was nothing short of the denial of the most basic of human rights and individual freedoms. And almost from the beginning, local police were intimately involved in this process. Whether it was providing intelligence information to invading army troops or harassing people who violated Nazi taboos – whether it was arresting political opponents or being the foot soldiers in the mobile killing squads – local police soon became part and parcel of the Nazi reign of repression and terror.

Which leads to another critically important question for today's police officers: could the Holocaust have happened without the active cooperation and participation of the local police? We may never know the answer to that question. But one thing we do know for certain: local police forces began to stand for a set of values that was totally contrary to their oath of office … and totally contrary to the mission of the police in a free, democratic and pluralistic society.

For our police recruits today, that is one of the primary lessons of the training they go through at

the Holocaust Memorial Museum. The lesson is straightforward, but powerful: a police officer's oath of office stands for something … something very sacred … something they must never, ever violate. For when police officers violate their oath, there are consequences – serious and potentially far-reaching consequences. The Holocaust is probably the most extreme example of just how horrific and far-reaching those consequences may be. But even small ethical violations on the part of police officers can result in peoples' rights being denied, their confidence in the police being eroded, and their communities being made less safe.

To drive home this point during the discussion portion of our training, we display the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics and the oath of office that all of our police officers swear to uphold. The contrast between those lofty ideals and the horrid and illegal behavior of so many police officers during the Nazi regime could not be more stark and more dramatic. That contrast is an extremely critical lesson for our officers – and one that they cannot ignore during the training. But the training does more than simply point out the consequences of police complicity or misconduct. The true power of this training, I think, lies in its call to action. The message for our recruits is loud and clear, I hope: when basic human and civil rights are threatened or denied, it is the police who need to be the first … the very first … to stand up for the vulnerable and the oppressed. Others should follow us – there is no doubt about that. But we, the police, need to be first. Our oath as police officers demands that we accept and follow through with this leadership role.

The Holocaust training also reminds us that local police must never become so politicized – as they were in Nazi Germany – that we exist primarily to carry out the will of political leaders … or to simply look the other way when political agendas or atrocities are carried out. Our power – our authority as police officers – come not from the politicians. Our power and authority come from the people. And above all else, our role as police officers is to protect and preserve the rights of the people – the right to assemble, the right to speak, the right to worship, the right to petition and criticize one's government, the right to be secure in our homes, our possessions and our beliefs. Defending these rights – for all people … all of the time – is what ultimately defines us as police officers. And we can never allow those principles to be undermined or eroded.

Too often, however, we see the opposite take place – not just in Nazi Germany, but in our own countries as well. In the United States, for example – with the escalation of crack cocaine, youth violence, child abuse and other serious problems in recent years – there have been various calls for relaxing the exclusionary rule concerning the collection of evidence, for reversing course on our long-standing search-and-seizure protections, and for overhauling the famous *Miranda* warnings which tell suspects they have a right to counsel and to remain silent.

More recently, in response to the war on terrorism, there have been increased calls for warrant-less searches, for holding individuals without charges for extended periods of time, for granting investigators broader access to library, video rental and website records, and for other investigative and enforcement approaches that appear to run counter to many of the longstanding traditions of criminal justice in North America. These and other suggestions are typically made in the name of more effective law enforcement and safer communities – goals that all of us certainly share, and that all of us are especially concerned about, given the new reality of terrorism.

No one denies that the police need to work harder and smarter in controlling crime and, now, combating terrorism. But in doing so, we must never compromise our staunch defense of the

bedrock values, principles and freedoms that are the framework of our system of justice. We must never buy into the notion – as the police in Nazi Germany did – that taking away individual rights is somehow the way to solve our collective crime problems and create safer communities for all. If our recruits leave their day at the Holocaust Memorial Museum with only one lesson learned, I hope it is that one.

* * * * *

You know for decades, people in the United States – and probably in Canada as well – have referred to the police as the "thin blue line" – as a fragile, but necessary demarcation between "good" and "evil" in our communities. I mentioned earlier that I didn't really like the concept of "zero tolerance." Well, I don't feel a whole lot better about the "thin blue line" either.

The Holocaust teaches us that in Nazi Germany, the police did become a line – and, eventually, not a very thin line – between what Hitler and his regime defined as "good" and "evil." The problem with being a "line" means you have to put each and every individual you encounter on one side or the other of that line – either the good side or the evil side. It requires police officers to make snap judgments about people – based not always on their behavior … but sometimes on their appearances, their attitudes, where the live, who they associate with, and other factors.

In essence, it is "profiling" at its very worst. In the Holocaust, we saw political leaders and the police turn profiling into a cruel and systematic science – gauging everything from peoples' eye color to hair texture to facial features. And today, in communities across North America, the police face accusations of "profiling" based on race, ethnicity, national origin and the like. Much of the tension around this issue stems, I think, from the "thin blue line" metaphor.

True "community policing" does not define police officers as a line – thin, blue or otherwise. We are not now – nor should we ever be – something that divides and separates our communities. Rather, I like to think of the police as a <u>thread</u> – a thread that is woven throughout the communities we serve … indeed, a thread that holds together the very fabric of democracy and freedom in our communities. If the police begin to unravel, then our very democracy begins to unravel as well. That image – much more so than the "thin blue line" concept – captures the <u>true</u> role of the police in protecting and preserving a free society.

This concept of the police as a thread, not a line, really hits home every time I walk through the Tower of Faces in the Holocaust Memorial Museum. For those of you who don't know it, the Tower of Faces is an amazing collection of photographs – rising two stories tall – from the community of Ejszyszki. On September 21, 1941, the eve of the Jewish New Year, a mobile killing squad entered the small town in what is now Lithuania. The killing squad herded some 4,000 Jews into three synagogues, where they were held for two days without food or water. Then, over the course of the next two days, the killing squad marched their captives – men, women and children – to cemeteries, lined them up in front of open pits, and shot them to death. In other words … destroying not only thousands of lives, but also the rich culture of this obviously rich and vibrant Jewish community.

Whenever I stop in the Tower of Faces and look at the people of Ejszyszki, the homes they lived in, the streets they walked, the events they celebrated, the games they played, the work they did … I have to ask myself one question that maybe only a police officer could ask: How could the police officers assigned to that community stand by and let these people be

destroyed, in the brutal manner in which they were killed?

The officers who served that community may not have grown up there, just as many of our police officers today did not grow up in the communities they now serve. But that doesn't matter. That is their community now. And when the community hurts, the police officer should hurt. When the community celebrates, the officer should celebrate. And especially when the community is threatened, the police officer must be the one to stand up and be counted. That is what it means to be a thread in the community. That is what it means to practice real "community policing." That is what it means to "serve and protect." If our modern-day police officers can adopt that attitude – and our training is designed to help them do that – then they cannot possibly stand by and let their communities be torn apart, as Ejszszki was.

The lessons of this period – and atrocities such as Ejszszki – are certainly sober ones, and I know that many of our police officers leave their day of training at the Museum feeling a bit unnerved and upset. But as I like to point out, the Holocaust does provide some wonderfully positive illustrations of what can happen when police officers do stand up in the face of evil and intolerance. And that's an important lesson as well.

For example, unlike local police in many of the other countries the Nazis invaded, the Danish police (along with some Hungarian police and others) refused to cooperate with the invading military. Just the opposite, in fact: Danish police actively organized and participated in rescue efforts that spared the lives of all but 51 of the estimated 7,200 Jews who were living in Denmark at the time. For police officers today, the heroism and bravery of the Danish police offer a real-life reminder of the impact the police can have in preserving rights and saving lives. But we can have an impact only when our officers are part of the communities they serve … when we share the values of those communities … and when we remain forever true to those values and to the values of our profession. So there is a lesson of hope in this training as well.

* * * * *

On various occasions this evening, I have alluded to the terrorist attacks of September 11th. Our training program was developed prior to "Nine-Eleven," but like everything else in policing today, we have had to adjust the training to ensure it remains relevant and meaningful.

The brutal assaults of September 11th immediately and forever changed policing in the United States, Canada, and countries throughout the free world. The attacks created new roles and responsibilities for local police – to protect our communities and to help secure our homelands. In the United States, the attacks altered the relationship between the federal government and local police, and placed new emphasis on our working together toward our common goals of safe neighborhoods and a safe homeland. The attacks have also given rise to new uses of technology to help us detect and prevent threats before the fact, and to respond more effectively to any further attacks that may occur. All of these developments are vitally important to the safety and security of our people and our democracies.

But as we wage a smart and vigorous war on terrorism, we must never allow our desire for safety and security to undermine our values and our principles of protecting human rights. All of the hijackers on September 11th were Arab males, just as the vast majority of murder suspects in Washington, DC, are African-American males. Does that mean that all Arab males are terrorists? Or that all African-American males are murderers? Of course not. It does mean that when we wage the war on terrorism or the war on street crime, we must be keenly aware of the

environment, the circumstances, the strategies and the tactics of the people we are dealing with. But we must avoid the very real temptation to treat all members of a certain group as if they were terrorists or street criminals.

Racial profiling – what I call "biased policing" – remains a serious issue for police in North America, and the issue has taken on new prominence following the terrorist attacks of 2001. And although profiling has been roundly rejected by police executives and leaders across the board, there are still some people who argue that profiling is an effective and efficient means to identify both terrorists and street criminals. Obviously, the Holocaust teaches us otherwise. And, I would argue that both history and common sense teach us that profiling is not only wrong, but counterproductive as well.

Profiling is wrong because it casts such a wide net over entire groups of people – a net that fails to distinguish among individuals, and a net that fails to protect the fundamental, human rights of those who are totally innocent of any wrongdoing. And profiling is counterproductive because it serves to alienate the very people that the police and others need to be engaging, in the battle against both crime and terrorism. If the next terrorist attack is likely to come from within elements of the Islamic community, then we in law enforcement need to be developing relationships and sources of information from within that mainstream community, the vast majority of whom detest the terrorists as much as we do. But profiling – casting suspicion on everyone within a particular group, in the hopes of catching of few – serves to alienate our potential friends, without bringing us much closer to our real enemies.

In this respect, I believe that a strategy based on developing relationships and protecting human rights actually serves to make our communities safer and our homeland stronger, than does a strategy based on profiling. We never have to compromise individual rights and liberties in order to achieve our goals of safety and security.

And that's where I believe the lessons of the Holocaust have such strength and such relevance for us today, as we enter a world that is different – a world that has been fundamentally altered – because of terrorism. Perhaps more so than any other event in human history, the Holocaust teaches us … "never again." It teaches us that we must do everything humanly possible to avoid making the mistakes that were made – and were allowed to be made – during the Holocaust … mistakes that were often in the name of public safety or public good. It teaches us that we must always treat other people with dignity and respect – and not allow ourselves to think of, or treat, any one group as being somehow "less than" us.

The Holocaust didn't happen overnight, although there were certainly major, milestone events such as Kristallnacht. Rather, it was a gradual process of marginalizing and dehumanizing fellow human beings … and of the larger community closing its eyes to the warning signs and, eventually, to the brutality. So today, it is incumbent upon all of us – especially our police officers and other public officials – to always keep our eyes open for any warning signs of profiling, of discrimination, of unequal treatment. And, as I have stressed tonight, it is incumbent upon us – when we see those warning signs – to step in and take action. Our vigilance and our commitment are probably more important than ever before, in this post-Nine-Eleven world of uncertainty and, yes, fear.

* * * * *

I have spoken this evening about the "big picture" lessons that our police officers explore in the

Holocaust training program. And they are very important lessons. But before I close, I want to mention one other lesson that our officers pick up from the day they spend at the Holocaust Memorial Museum. It is a much more intimate and personal lesson. It is a lesson in how each of us deals with our own private and personal prejudices – in our very public jobs as police officers.

Nobody enters this profession without some prejudices. It's human nature. And police officers are, after all, human beings too. I think it's ironic that officers often talk about the differences between themselves and "civilians." Whenever I hear this, I like to point out the fact that before any of us put on the uniform and badge, we too were "civilians." And to this day, we are still not all that different from the "civilians" we serve. What that means, of course, is that we come to this job with certain preconceptions about people … certain stereotypes … and, yes, certain prejudices.

The Holocaust training program forces our recruits to confront those highly personal feelings in a very compelling, but supportive way. Nobody is asked to publicly confess any prejudices they may hold. But I think any person who walks through the Museum or goes through our training would be hard-pressed not to go home and take a deep look inside themselves, at their own attitudes and beliefs and values. I know I do each time I visit the Museum. And because our recruits take this introspective journey early on in their careers, I am convinced they start off being more aware and more tolerant than they might otherwise have been. I only wish that I had started my own journey of introspection earlier in my law enforcement career.

* * * * *

My remarks tonight have focused on the history of our training program and the lessons that the Holocaust holds for our police officers of today and tomorrow. But as we move forward – especially in a world where the threat of terrorism is real and ever-present – I think we need to look beyond the field of policing … and look for ways to incorporate the lessons of the Holocaust into the consciousness and the training of other professionals as well. For while the police played a central role in carrying out the Holocaust, they by no means did it alone. It took the involvement and complicity of many others – lawyers, judges, teachers, doctors, the clergy and more. All doctors, for example, take the Hippocratic oath pledging, above all else, "to do no harm." But during the Holocaust, doctors on a routine basis conducted unbelievably cruel and vicious experiments on other human beings.

So just as police officers during the Holocaust lost touch with the communities they served and the oaths they took, so, too, did countless members of other professions. I think it is time for the leaders of these professions to look at how they, too, could use this momentous event in history – and the many educational resources that exist today to help us understand the Holocaust – to train better doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, clergy members and other professionals for the 21st Century. For members of these professions, the lessons of the Holocaust are just as powerful and relevant as they have proven to be for our police officers.

American philosopher George Santayana probably summed it up best, in his much quoted statement from 1905: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." As we move forward in a new and uncertain world, it is critically important that all people – but especially our police officers – heed Santayana's advice and "remember the past." By helping our officers remember, understand and appreciate the lessons of the Holocaust, I believe that we are helping to ensure that the police will always stand up for human rights and individual

freedom, as we go about our jobs of preserving the peace.

And I want to encourage all of you to keep up your important work of “remembering the past … and educating for the future” as well. Trust me … there are a lot of other people out there like myself when I became chief in Washington, DC – people who may not know a lot about the Holocaust today, but people who can do some amazing things once they have had a little exposure and a little bit of knowledge. Go out and find those people, educate them – and our communities and our democracies will be much safer and stronger because of your efforts.

I want to thank you once again for the honor of being your speaker tonight. And let me close by offering an invitation to you to come visit Washington, DC, and, if possible, see our training program in action. I think you will be moved and impressed. Thank you very much.